

HOUSE RESOLUTION 71
By Cooper B

A RESOLUTION to congratulate the placement of First
Presbyterian Church of Memphis on the National
and Tennessee Registers of Historic Places.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should recognize
those notable communities that preserve the panoramic history of the great State of Tennessee;
and

WHEREAS, on March 15, 2005, the National Park Service of the United States
Department of the Interior, upon nomination of the Tennessee Historical Commission and the
Department of Environment and Conservation, placed the First Presbyterian Church of
Memphis on the National and Tennessee Registers of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Tennesseans have demonstrated incomparable pride and dedication to
preserving Tennessee, Southern, and American history, and the First Presbyterian Church of
Memphis now holds a singular position of honor among the historical treasures of Tennessee;
and

WHEREAS, the church, located at 166 Poplar Avenue in Memphis, was founded in June
of 1828 by a small group of Presbyterians lead by the Reverend W. C. Blair; the congregation
met first in private homes and then in the "Community Meeting House" in Court Square until the
completion of the first church edifice in 1834 at the corner of Poplar and Third Streets; and

WHEREAS, as the congregation grew from the influx of new residents in Memphis,
many of whom were Presbyterians from the Piedmont regions of Virginia, North Carolina and
South Carolina; the Cumberland Plateau; and the mountains of East Tennessee, the need for a
larger building became apparent; a new "beautiful Gothic building" was completed in 1854; and

WHEREAS, on January 15, 1883, the second building burned and Charleston architect Edward Culliat Jones was retained to design a new church in the Romanesque Revival style; the new edifice, which included elements of the emerging Aesthetic movement in the design and decoration, was completed within 12 months of the fire, despite the fact that Memphis was still recovering from the Yellow Fever epidemics in 1878 and 1879 and the accompanying population loss; and

WHEREAS, there is physical evidence visible in the shell of the present edifice that suggests that a portion of the shell of the burned 1854 structure were saved and incorporated into the present building, most notably in the second story level of the tower is “toothed” into different colored brick at the corner of the sanctuary wall; whether Jones was able to incorporate significant portions of the 1854 church has been to a degree muted by the 1928 renovations in which Jones’ spire was replaced, the High Victorian Gothic revival pinnacles were removed from the gable end of the narthex and a Sunday School wing was added; and

WHEREAS, to be considered for the prestigious distinction of being placed on the National Register of Historic Places, properties must be associated with events that have made contributions to history; associated with the lives of significant people from the past; embody characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; and yield important historical information, except in the most extreme cases, properties must also be at least fifty years old; and

WHEREAS, through the preservation of historic properties such as the First Presbyterian Church of Memphis, the citizens of Tennessee can continue to benefit from the panoramic history our State has to offer and learn its many lessons for the future; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the First Presbyterian Church of Memphis be recognized and honored for its special place in Tennessee history as we celebrate its recent certification by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior and its inclusion on the National and Tennessee Registers of Historic Places.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.